

FROM THE EDITORS

THIS ISSUE INTRODUCES Paul Trachtman, whose essay "Who Owns the Past, Rapanui Points of View" deals with the thoughts and opinions of islanders today, and the current land-ownership controversy on Rapa Nui. This is a timely subject. His interviews with local Rapanui islanders provide insight into the many thorny problems facing the island, including "to whom do the archaeological wonders of Easter Island belong?" Some say to the world, others say to the islanders. This question is further complicated by the government of Chile, to say nothing of the intra-island rivalries that pit one island faction against the other. One group wants to expel Chileans from the island. Trachtman is the author of a recent article about Easter Island that appeared in the *Smithsonian* magazine (March 2002). Our next issue will have another, follow-up, paper by Trachtman.

A PORTION OF THE PAPERS from the International Union of Prehistoric and Protohistoric Sciences, Liege, Belgium (September 2001) are included in this issue. The idea to develop a symposium on new research results from Rapa Nui came from a meeting with Roger Langohr, Department of Geology and Soil Science, University of Ghent. There are few regional venues available for European scholars who are interested in Polynesian prehistory, and thus the occurrence of the broad program of the UISPP provided just such an opportunity. At the urging of Langohr, a symposium was organized and titled *Environmental, Geomorphological and Social Issues in Rapa Nui Prehistory*.

The symposium was enjoyable, with a variety of papers and lively discussions on soils and sweet potato agriculture, the *moai* roads, gardens, religious ideology, and environment. This issue contains papers by Dirk Huyge and Nicolas Cauwe; Christopher Stevenson, Thegn Ladefoged and Sonia Haoa; G. Louwagie and Roger Langohr; and Henri J. Dumont. We hope that you enjoy them as much as we did in Belgium. The remaining papers will appear in our next issue.

—Chris Stevenson

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE WE WELCOME Heather Waldroup of UC Santa Cruz who shares with us some views of Gauguin's art vs. his lifestyle. Art historians (and others) will enjoy reading her essay, based upon her teaching experiences. The question addressed concerns whether an artist can be judged by the glorious result of his/her genius only, and is it OK for a genius to live his/her life outside the moral limits of society? Gauguin's life was a train wreck. He was constantly broke, on morphine for pain, infected by syphilis, his eyesight failing, one leg crippled. Yet his paintings are full of sensuality of form and color, heat and torpor – and sex. Sex without guilt, and paradise on earth. Today he would be called a dirty old man for his relationships with young girls. But at that time, in Polynesia, this most likely was not the taboo that it is in our society today.

OUR "LOOK BACK" SECTION in this issue contains a little gem from 1894, thanks to Tom Christopher's Amazing Library. The article, written by a Frank Norton (whose credentials are not

stated) makes an amazing leap from the Thomson report into Fantasyland. Consider this line from Norton's article: "A line drawn straight through the earth from Easter Island to the same degree of north latitude will be found to come out within two degrees of the Pyramid at Gizeh." [Think of that! Must be something serious going on!!] Clearly, Norton is a product of his time, when all things – never mind how off-the-wall – may be possible. What is scary is that there are folks out there today, still espousing some of these same ideas.

Over the years, we have been collecting papers and letters that plunge into startling theories and speculations about archaeological sites, and many of these deal with Easter Island. There is just something about Rapa Nui that appears to bring out bizarre speculations. Space travelers are "the key" according to many writers who have written to share their hypotheses. One claimed that Easter Island was a "rest stop and recreation station" for space travelers in order for them to become acclimated, and the statues "commemorated a space traveler who lost his eyesight when evading a black hole." Another theory was that the statues were carved with "blow torches or thermal lances." An eager theorist wrote that Easter Island was a "central energy plant" from which energy was transmitted to South America; the *rongo rongo* boards were carved using "power that emanates from the island, up through the statues, and comes out the eyes in the form of laser beams."

Psychic or "intuitive" archaeology (to say nothing of the lunatic fringe) needs to be counterbalanced by books that are authored by scientists but that are intellectually accessible to the general public. All too often, scholarly books, liberally sprinkled with techno-babble, are written for other scientists and these never cross the radar screen of the reading public. And now there is a shift to popular TV shows that stress the "mysteries" and the "unknowns" of various exotic places. Narrated by movie stars with melodic voices, these invariably deal with ideas from the rationally challenged, stressing "secrets known by ancients" but which are "no longer accessible to us today". Isaac Asimov put it succinctly: "We must therefore present the view of reason, not out of the hope of reconstructing the deserts of ruined minds that have been rusted shut – which is all but impossible – but to educate and train new and fertile minds."

—Georgia Lee

GRANT MCCALL NEEDS NO INTRODUCTION to readers of *Rapa Nui Journal*. His book, *Rapanui. Tradition and Survival on Easter Island* (University of Hawaii Press 1980; second edition 1994) is a classic, and is based on his dissertation of 1976. As part of his doctoral research, McCall studied the parish archives of the Chincha (Guano) Islands (in Matarani, Peru), the Peruvian government archives, and newspapers of the day, searching for clues of the kidnapped Rapanui islanders. What he discovered is that not one Rapanui islander ended up on the Chincha Islands. They were sold as household servants and field workers on mainland Peru. In 1861-3, the Chincha Islands were closed

due to attacks from the Spanish and when they resumed business around 1864, there were no surviving Polynesians in Peru. Despite the fact that this information is in his dissertation, practically every book written states that the Rapanui were transported to the "Guano Islands" where they died. The kidnapping episodes were repugnant and horrific, but the Chincha Islands did not figure in the unhappy fate of the Rapanui.

McCall has been on sabbatical – and on Easter Island – for more than a year, gathering material for what we suspect will be a new and important book. He is also working on a publication regarding genealogy which will be published by the Easter Island Foundation. Its working title is *Onomastico Rapanui*. It will include the census of 1886 and base genealogies of the islanders, and it will be bilingual.

McCall has verified that the minimum population on Rapanui in 1872 was 110, not 111 because the person who made the census said, in effect, "...there are 111 people on the island. . . including me" and he, the census taker, was from the continent. Grant also confirmed that Ahu Tongariki is in bad shape because of the use of earth fill rather than rock fill during reconstruction of the *ahu*. He noted that it took a *tsunami* to destroy the platform made by the Rapanui, but only a few months of rain to make the stability of the reconstruction in question.

We have enjoyed receiving email from McCall while he has been on the island. He always has one eye out for the humorous and off-beat happening, as well as keeping an ear tuned to the various political events, and we will miss our "island correspondent" when he returns to Australia in June.

THE 15-YEAR INDEX TO RAPA NUI JOURNAL is now available. The updated Index was compiled by Marilyn G. Stearns, who also compiled our Ten-Year Index. It is organized by Volume, Author, and Title and is a valuable tool for anyone researching material about Easter Island. (See the inside back cover for ordering information). Marilyn worked on Easter Island in the 1980s with the University of California (Berkeley) Research Expeditions Program. She helped document petroglyphs at 'Orongo where she terrorized everyone by hanging out over the cliff to document the carved rocks, and she also documented petroglyphs on Motu Nui – a real hardship project as one may imagine: just getting on Motu Nui is a hazard, let alone camping there. Thanks Marilyn! You are a star.

THIS ISSUE HAS A PARTICULARLY LARGE GROUP of "Moai Sightings". . . those ubiquitous little replicas, or what some folks call replicas but which are, in the main, pretty sad representations of our famous Real Moai. The sheer numbers of these sightings never cease to amaze us. They are in commercial advertisements, in gardens, or just "there", with no apparent logic. They are made from a variety of materials from chocolate to cement, to wood or plastic. And they are not just in the United States; this issue includes some from Belgium, Holland, and South Africa. Aside from the *moai* at a Kon Tiki bar (where one can imagine a vague connection), we are left breathless at the incongruity of Easter Island *moai* replicas that are found 'out of context'. Oh if they could only talk!

IN OTHER NEWS IN THE WORLD OF ARCHAEOLOGY, a perceptive editorial in *Antiquity* (Vol. 75:288 for June 2001) by Simon Stoddart and Caroline Malone discusses the non-publication of fieldwork, a recurring problem in archaeological studies everywhere. Excavation of a site destroys it, and the information can only be preserved in record. . . and this is something that only the excavator can effectively do. The longer the time-span, the less apt it is to be a complete record. Stoddart and Malone claim that if the original excavator has not begun publication within ten years of completing fieldwork, it is unlikely he/she will ever do so. Easter Island archaeological studies are a prime example. While some, such as Chris Stevenson, Paul Wallin and Helene Martinsson-Wallin, promptly publish results of field work, we can all think of many who work on Easter Island who have never published their work. Stoddart and Malone address the idea of stopping excavation projects until publication is completed, or providing sanctions for those who do not publish.

THE CHAUVET NAME

I am indebted to Steven Roger Fischer through the medium of Georgia Lee for a definitive answer to questions about the correct name of Dr Stephen Chauvet. I had labored for years under the erroneous belief that the author of *L'île de Paques et ses Mystères* had been blessed with a compound surname. Dr Fischer's reference to Chauvet's obituary by Patrick O'Reilly in *Journal de la Société des Océanistes*, (December 1951:119 – 222) brought me long-overdue clarity that I wish to share with all. The *necrologie* notice runs to three pages. According to O'Reilly, Stephen Chauvet was born in Normandy on November 27, 1885, into a family of scientists and intellectuals. Among his father's inventions was the arc light, the "treuil Chauvet" a windlass that revolutionized mining exploration, and the first automobile carburetor; his grandfather had drained the swamps of the river Somme.

Stephen Chauvet was a brilliant medical doctor, whose research and writing of over 300 medical publications gained him many honors. After the World War I, in which he was severely injured, O'Reilly writes, *Chauvet fut touché par la grâce de l'art negre et par le démon de la collection*. In the years following, he was very active in the collection, study, and publication of *les arts indigènes* including both African and Oceanic. The obituary concludes with a twenty-item *bibliographie des travaux ethnographiques du Docteur Stephen Chauvet*. Readers will be familiar with some if not all of these, perhaps most notably *Les arts indigènes en Nouvelle-Guinée*, Paris, 1930 and the Spanish version of his earlier work on Easter Island, *La isla de Pascua y sus misterios*, Santiago, 1946.

Chauvet died in Paris, April 2, 1950. Let there be an end to the corruption of his memory by robbing him of his given name, finding him a new one, or manufacturing further nominative indignities. In a cursory search of the literature, in addition to Stephen Chauvet as a surname, I found Stephen-Chauvet, Stephan Chauvet, and Charles Stéphen-Chauvet ... There have probably been others: may there be no more.

– Norman Hurst, Cambridge, Massachusetts